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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to describe what master's-level clinical training programs value and teach. There are two methodologies available in describing these programs. One is a view from the "outside," using data which describe programs. The assumption behind this approach is that a program description reflects the content, faculty training philosophies, and beliefs, and that it thereby yields insights into the quality of the program. The second approach would look at programs from the "inside." Data would be collected on what actually happens in the training of students; such data would include content of courses, time students spend at various activities, and the nature of these activities. The outside approach was used in this study. Program features and admissions data for 81 programs were listed from analysis of American Psychological Association (APA) Catalogue and program literature. Based on an extensive literature review, three areas were studied, and three Likert-type rating scales were developed for ethics, professionalism, and supervision respectively. Overall, the programs say little about ethics and professionalism in their literature; supervision is mentioned more often. The discussion emphasizes the need for programs to deliberately include all three quality areas in describing their training, and further research involving an in-depth "inside" evaluation of master's-level clinical psychology training program curricula. (LLL)

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Master's-Level Clinical Training in Psychology: What Do We Tell the World About What We Do

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to describe what master's-level clinical training programs value and teach by analyzing APA Catalogue and program literature. Program features and admissions data for 81 programs are listed. Based on an extensive literature review, three areas were studied, and three Likert-type rating scales for (a) ethics, (b) professionalism, and (c) supervision ("quality" dimensions) were developed. Descriptive statistics are presented. Overall, the programs say little about ethics and professionalism in their literature; supervision is mentioned more often. The discussion emphasizes the need for (a) programs to deliberately include all three quality areas in describing their training, and, (b) further research involving an in-depth "inside" evaluation of master's-level clinical psychology training programs' curricula.

Master's-Level Clinical Training in Psychology:

What Do We Tell the World About What We Do

The fourth ever National Conference on Applied Master's Training in Psychology was held in June, 1990, in Norman, Oklahoma. There was much discussion about the professional abilities, roles, competencies, and ethical standards of students in these programs. These are the same issues that are salient in the literature over the past four decades ((Kellogg & Perlman, 1990; Perlman, 1990). National Conference participants voted to recommend standards of education which would serve to maintain and improve ongoing applied masters-level training.

At least some of the problem surrounding applied master's-level training in psychology does not involve the actual training, its quality and curriculum; rather it centers on what others know of and how they perceive and may, therefore, react to this training. In program descriptions and materials, what do these training programs tell others (prospective students, doctoral psychologists, state legislators, etc.) about what they value and teach? This question is the focus of the

present research.

There are two methodologies available in describing these training programs. One is a view from the "outside". This approach utilizes data (e.g., APA Catalogue or program literature) which describe programs. The assumption behind this approach is that a program description reflects the content, faculty training philosophies and beliefs, and yields insights into the "quality" of a program. Someone using the second approach would look at programs from the "inside". They would gather data on what actually happens in the training of students such as content of courses, time students spend at various activities and what these activities are, and so forth. The "outside" approach is the one utilized herein.

In order to provide a framework for this description a review of training and employment literature for master's-level clinical issues from 1948 to the present was conducted (Kellogg & Perlman, 1990). The literature included journals and APA publications which were both research and non-research based. After a close reading of the literature three dimensions (ethics, professionalism, and supervision) were chosen

for special study. These three variables define programs as being closer to or further away from what many authors have described as "strong", "valid", "reasonable", or "quality" training programs.

Method

Subjects

Ninety-six programs which offer the terminal master's degree in psychology with a clinical emphasis listed in the 1987-1988 APA Graduate Study in Psychology and Associated Fields catalogue were studied. Fifteen programs were deleted from study because (a) they no longer offered a clinical emphasis (n=5), or (b) variables could not be accurately coded due to insufficient information provided (n=10).

Instruments - Procedure

Information pertaining to the specific master's programs was extracted from the Graduate Study in Psychology and Associated Fields (APA, 1988) catalogue. Also, any and all catalogues, handouts, and brochures provided by the colleges/ universities was utilized. All programs were mailed a postcard requesting all materials describing their master's-level clinical graduate psychology program. Two mailings of requests

followed by a phone call request yielded a response rate of 97 percent.

In order to describe and compare programs (N = 81), it was necessary to code data from the APA catalogue and program materials. Three Likert-type rating scales were developed to measure the programs' emphases on (a) ethics, (b) "professionalism", (skills, competencies, and professional behavior), and (c) supervision (see Table 1). This portion of the coding was conducted by a panel consisting of two graduate psychology students. The scaling facilitated consensus on rating programs on these three dimensions. The reader should notice that a higher rating for these three variables (ethics, professionalism and supervision) means they were mentioned explicitly in the program materials and we might assume were, therefore, important to the faculty engaged in training of master's-level clinicians.

In order to understand something about the master's clinical programs being studied program dimensions and various admission criteria used by the programs were gathered. The programs are described in Tables 2, and 3.

Insert Tables 1, 2, 3 about here

A reading of Tables 2 and 3 which contain descriptive program and admission data leads to the following observations.

- Terminal master's training takes place at non-doctoral institutions.
- Most programs are simply titled, "Clinical Psychology".
- Almost two-thirds of the programs require a thesis.
- Number of full-time faculty in a program varies widely.
- Most programs utilize few if any part-time faculty.
- Programs take, on the average, two years to complete.
- Letters of recommendation, clinical work, and research experience are all important for admission.
- The interview, used for admission purposes, is not popular yet.

- An undergraduate with a "B" grade point average will be considered for admission in most master's psychology clinical programs.
- Less than one-third of the programs require the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) for admission. One-fourth of the programs do not require nor do they prefer the GRE be taken for admission.
- The large standard deviation for the GRE-Analytical subtest may be due to the fact that it is the newest of the subtests and programs are not in close agreement as to an acceptable score.
- Most programs consider a score of 500 on the GRE subtests and an overall score of 1000 as acceptable.
- Programs vary in size and in the number of full and part time students accepted. A closer look at program size revealed that two programs admit large numbers of students (75 and 81) to attend on a part-time basis.
- The student to faculty (full and part-time) ratio is just over 1 to 1.
- The only undergraduate course consistently required by these programs is statistics.

. Ninety-one percent of the programs listed one course, out of several possibilities, besides statistics, as required.

Results

An evaluation of the ethics, professionalism, and supervision dimensions of the programs reveals that ethics and professionalism do not occupy a prominent place in the program descriptions. On the other hand, supervision receives emphasis in program materials.

The variables ethics, professionalism, and supervision were combined to create a "quality scale" which measures "how good" the programs are based on their literature and APA Catalogue text. A measure of internal consistency, Cronbach Alpha, for the "quality scale" was 0.59 (just below the 0.60 usually accepted). The "quality scale" range is from three to 13 with three reflecting the lowest scores on ethics, professionalism and supervision and 13 being the highest. Fifty-seven percent of the programs scored a 3, 4, or 5 signifying that over half of the programs attained the lowest scores possible. Scores of 6, 7, and 8 comprise 28% of the programs and 15% of the programs obtained scores of 9, 10, and 12. The average

"quality scale" score obtained is 5.8 (SD = 2.5, median = 5, mode = 4).

Discussion

"Quality"

Many programs are weak in their presentation and treatment of the three quality dimensions (ethics, professionalism, and supervision) in their APA catalogue descriptions and program literature. If the training itself is as weak in these three areas as the literature (usually by omission of content) would lead one to believe, the programs may be weaker than the authors (originally) suspected. This would fuel the arguments of those psychologists who are against applied master's clinical training. It would weaken the arguments of those who favor such training. The issue is one of how reliably program literature reflects actual behavior, i.e., the training itself. Based on knowledge of our program and several others, programs may be doing a better job on the "quality" issue than our data suggest. Program faculty may want to rewrite their program literature and APA Catalogue material to reflect attention to ethics, supervision, and professionalism.

Types of Students Admitted

There is some commonality nationally for entrance requirements to master's-level clinical psychology programs. On the other hand, different types of students are accepted than for doctoral clinical psychology programs. Overall, the data on master's-level admission requirements appear to be lower than those required for entrance into a Ph.D. program. One cannot necessarily conclude (although this can be the case) that all master's programs admit "academically poorer" or "second class" students; in most cases they may simply be different from those who enter Ph.D. programs. Perhaps master's programs attract the older, more experienced student, or those who cannot financially afford lengthy doctoral training.

Future Research

The primary thrust of future research must be in use of an "inside methodology", one that focuses on quality of training. It would be interesting to study the curricula of master's-level clinical training programs in depth. For example, what do courses labeled "clinical psychopathology" cover? How well and in what ways are the quality training issues of ethics,

professionalism, and supervision treated in training? Answers to these and similar questions may bring the field of psychology one step closer to discovering the current status of the master's-level training programs in clinical psychology and in answering the long standing issue of the worth of the master's-level psychologist.

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Author Notes

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Table 1

Three Dimensions of Master's-Level Clinical Programs: Ethics, Professionalism, and Supervision

Ethics		
1 -	the term was not mentioned, the topic was not discussed in any of the available literature;	64%
2 -	the term was mentioned in passing but was not a topic discussed at any length in the program literature;	
3 -	the term was mentioned and was a topic of discussion in the program literature;	10%*
4 -	course on ethics offered as an elective;	
5 -	course on ethics was a required course.	26%
Professionalism		
1 -	not mentioned;	72%
2 -	mentioned;	6%
3 -	professionalism named as a goal of the program;	10%

(Table continues)

4 - a method for attaining professionalism is specified in the program literature (evaluation of skills, competencies and professionalism attained during an internship); 9%

5 - assessment of professionalism conducted and criteria set which students must meet in order to be maintained in or to graduate from that program (the granting of the degree is based on professional competencies, students are required to maintain professional competence in order to remain in the program). 4%

Supervision

1 - no specific mention of direct supervision, only implied; 33%

2 - supervision mentioned but not emphasized 38%

3 - supervision emphasized (supervised by a licensed professional, under the direct supervision of doctoral level clinical psychologists). 28%

* Coding categories 2, 3, and 4 sum to 10%.

Table 2

Master's-Level Clinical Program Dimensions

	%	N
Master degree offered		
Master of Art	63%	51
Master of Science	32%	26
Both degrees	5%	4
Ph.D. offered		
Yes	6%	5
No	94%	76
Title of the program		
Clinical Psychology	61%	49
Other (e.g., Applied Psychology Clinical Applied Behavior Analysis, Clinical-Community, Clinical-Counseling, etc.)	39%	32
Thesis work		
Required	64%	52
Not required	25%	20
No data	11%	9

(table continues)

Average Number of Full-Time Faculty in the psychology department	15 (*SD* = 9.6, Median = 13, Mode = 8)
Average Number of Part-Time faculty the psychology department	7 (*SD* = 16.9, Median = 2, Mode = 0)
Average number of Semester Credits/Hours required: (quarter hours were converted to semester hours by multiplying them by two-thirds)	40 (*SD* = 9.8, Median = 39, Mode = 30)

Table 3

Admission Criteria for Master's-Level Clinical Psychology Programs

	%	N
Importance of 6 Dimensions (as listed in the APA Catalogue)		
Research experience		
High	27%	22
Medium	37%	30
Low	20%	16
No data	16%	13
Work experience		
High	20%	16
Medium	46%	37
Low	20%	16
No data	14%	12
Extracurricular activities		
High	3%	2
Medium	27%	22
Low	49%	40
No data	21%	17

(Table continues)

Clinically Related Public Service		
High	31%	25
Medium	43%	35
Low	12%	10
No data	14%	11
The letter of recommendation		
High	58%	47
Medium	33%	27
Low	4%	3
No data	5%	4
The interview		
High	24%	19
Medium	15%	12
Low	6%	5
No data	55%	45

Grade Point Average Required or Preferred for Admission	
Undergraduate GPA on a 4-Point Scale	2.86 (*SD*= 0.24, Median/Mode = 3)
Last two years	3.04 (*SD* = 0.21, Median/Mode = 3)

(Table continues)

Undergraduate Psychology	3.06 (*SD* = 0.19, Median/Mode =3)

Graduate Record Examinations (GRE)

Required for admission	30%	24
Preferred for admission	43%	35
Not required	20%	16
No data	7%	6

Average GRE-Verbal score required or preferred for admission: (*n* = 42)	493 (*SD* = 46.9, Median/Mode = 500)
Average GRE-Quantitative score required or preferred for admission: (*n* = 42)	499 (*SD* = 43.1, Median/Mode = 500)
Average GRE-Analytic score required or preferred for admission: (*n* =42)	500 (*SD* = 106.1, Median/Mode = 500)

(Table continues)

Average GRE-Overall score verbal + quantitative) required or preferred for admission: (n = 42)	968 (SD= 112, Median/Mode = 1000

Student Enrollment

Average annual number of Student Openings in each program	17 (SD = 12.8, Median = 14.5, Mode = 12)
Average number of Full-Time Students enrolled annually	18 (SD = 13.6, Median = 16.5, Mode = 10)
Average number of Part-Time Students enrolled annually	12 (SD = 17.1, Median = 5, Mode = 0)

Undergraduate Courses Required for Admission

Statistics	80%	65
Experimental Psychology	56%	45
Abnormal Psychology	34%	28
Testing course	30%	24
History of Psychology	17%	14